

**Ambassador's Remarks at the Earth Day Event with the Polish Green Building Council:
"Go Green! Building a More Sustainable Future"
Agora Headquarters, April 12 at 16:00**

Dzień dobry. Miło mi powitać wszystkich na obchodach Dnia Ziemi. Witam też gości w American Corners w Gdańsku, Łodzi, Wrocławiu. Witam Konsulat w Krakowie i Urząd Miasta w Radomiu.

[Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to be here and welcome you all to this event in recognition of Earth Day. In addition to our audience in front of me, we are joined by our American Corners in Gdańsk, Łódź, and Wrocław, our Consulate in Kraków, and Radom City Hall.]

I'm so glad to see our colleagues from the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Environment.

With us today, we have architects, students from technical universities across Poland, business leaders, and government officials – we all share an interest in green buildings and the environment. Instead of gathering as a group in one location, we are connecting through the internet – and avoiding carbon emissions by not traveling such long distances to participate in this conference. Thanks to all of you in the remote locations for your virtual presence.

I would like to thank Agora for hosting this event. It is fitting that we gather here to talk about green buildings. Agora's headquarters is a partially-green building that combines ecological awareness and a modern, innovative design. I also want to thank Agnes Vorbrodt-Schurma, the Founder and CEO of the Polish Green Building Council, and Scot Horst, the Senior Vice President of LEED, for organizing this event with us.

Recently I read in the Warsaw Business Journal that Warsaw is the 4th most attractive destination for real estate investment in Europe. That's good news for my Warsaw audience in particular – but I think it is a sign that there is great market potential for green homes, offices and municipal buildings here and across Poland.

In fact, our own Embassy is looking to invest in new, energy-efficient housing. We want to replace the obsolete, inefficient housing owned by the US Government in Poland. We would like our homes to be models of “green” building materials and construction methods, many of which come from US manufacturers.

Today one of my Management Officers is attending the Energy Efficiency Global Forum in Brussels, where he will learn about the latest energy efficient technologies and how to implement them in our Embassy construction projects.

The US Embassy in Warsaw is not alone in its commitment to reducing the greenhouse emissions of our properties – we are one of 60 diplomatic missions that are part of the League of Green Embassies. This network was formed in 2007 in order to combat climate change and reduce operating costs by sharing energy efficiency ideas and best practices. I don't know if you've heard about the US government's budget woes, but at every level of government, officials are looking at ways to save money.

Businesses also want to reduce operating costs.

Homeowners are always interested in lowering their utility bills.

Building green is a sensible, environmentally-friendly way to do that. Investments in energy efficiency end up paying for themselves time and time again.

There are some creative projects underway at US Embassies around the world. Last month in Helsinki, they installed Windstream Technologies' wind turbines designed for retrofit into the urban landscape. In January, SOL, Inc. provided solar-powered LED lighting systems to the Embassy in Panama. These will illuminate the Embassy facilities for years without the threat of power surges, brownouts or blackouts.

Our Mission in Geneva has 950 square meters of solar panels on its rooftops, along walls, and over windows. At peak performance, this system generates enough electricity to power 37 average-sized homes.

It's not just the State Department and its overseas posts that are pursuing energy efficiency – President Obama has launched the “Better Buildings Initiative,” which aims to achieve a 20 percent improvement in energy efficiency by 2020 and reduce business owners' energy bills by about \$40 billion per year.

His plan will spur innovation by reforming tax and other incentives to retrofit. He is creating a new competitive grant program for states and localities that will streamline their regulations to attract retrofit investment. He has challenged the private sector – CEOs and university presidents – to become leaders in saving energy and make their facilities more efficient. In turn, they will become eligible for benefits, including public recognition, technical assistance, and best-practices sharing through a network of peers.

In addition, the General Services Administration in the U.S. is upgrading the requirement for new federal building construction from LEED Silver to LEED Gold certification – LEED is US Green Building Council's rating system which evaluates and measure achievements in sustainable design. Our presenter, Scot Horst, will tell us more about that later.

I don't want to steal any of his thunder, but I do want to mention that I used to work in a LEED gold certified building when I was with the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, DC. The gold certification really is a status symbol in the US -- for our organization, it validated our commitment to environmental responsibility. And when we did the math, we figured out that the energy savings would more than pay for the costs associated with reaching LEED gold status.

On March 30, President Obama announced his "Blueprint for a Secure Energy Future" that outlines a comprehensive national energy policy. During his speech, he brought up the fact that our homes, businesses, and factories consume 70% of the energy that we use and it costs us billions of dollars in energy bills.

The President challenged Americans to find ways to boost our efficiency so we use less oil. And he devoted an entire section of his blueprint on how the Administration plans to provide consumers with choices and incentives to build more efficient homes and businesses, and to upgrade existing buildings.

For example, the Department of Energy is adopting an aggressive schedule for setting new appliance efficiency standards for the next five years. Americans will receive rebates to purchase new energy efficient appliances when they replace used appliances.

Homeowners who perform simple upgrades to their insulation, water heaters, windows, roofing and doors can receive rebates up to \$1,500. In addition, the Administration will be providing more workforce training in areas such as energy auditing and building operations.

Earth Day is next Friday and my team at the Embassy thought talking about the impact of green buildings would be a good way to commemorate the 41st anniversary of Earth Day. Earth Day – one of America's best exports -- was started by a US Senator, Gaylord Nelson. The purpose was to promote community conversations on the challenges and opportunities related to sustainability.

So we have partnered with Agnes and Scot to discuss the impact of green buildings and how we – and all of you – can help build a more sustainable future.

And with that, I wish you all a very informative, useful discussion! Thank you. Postawmy na zielone budownictwo!